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RUHBANB/OKINAWA FLD OFC US FORCES JAPAN CP BUTLER JA PRIORITY
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SUBJECT: TOKYO MEDIA REACTION - SIX-PARTY TALKS

¶1. LEAD STORIES: Front-page stories on Thursday morning included the Nobel Prize award ceremony in Oslo and the six-party talks in Beijing.'

¶2. "Chinese Arbitration Facing Crucial Moment" A correspondent for the top-circulation, moderate Yomiuri wrote from Beijing (12/11): "In view of the continued stalemate in the six-party head-of-delegation meeting, the Chinese are actively leading negotiations by presenting a draft accord in an attempt to forge a consensus on the most important issue of codifying verification procedures. It reflects Beijing's desire to find a solution to the trouble that Washington and Pyongyang are having, as well as its desire to disrupt the pattern of the U.S. and DPRK jointly taking the lead in negotiations."

¶3. "U.S. Failed to Coordinate Until Final Moments" A writer for the liberal Tokyo Shimbun reported from Beijing (12/11): "The gap between the U.S. and North Korea over their interpretations of the October bilateral accord on verification remained throughout the Beijing talks, given that the 'verbal commitment' in the bilateral agreement on the issue of nuclear sampling and other verification modalities has apparently led North Korea to react strongly to demands for concessions by the other parties. Prior to the start of the Beijing round, the U.S., Japan, and South Korea agreed on the need to establish a clear and stringent verification regime that would not allow any misunderstanding. Russia, which had been a bystander to that point, has also demanded strict verification measures.... The fact that all the members aside from the DPRK are united is the only positive development in the latest round."

¶4. "ROK Attempt to Improve Ties with Pyongyang Suffers Setback" A correspondent for the liberal Tokyo Shimbun

said in a Beijing dispatch (12/11): "The growing likelihood of the six-party talks going into recess will deal a blow to South Korea, which had hoped to use any progress on the nuclear front to improve its cooling relations with North Korea. Additionally, a new rift has emerged between the North and South during the Beijing talks over the timeframe for the completion of multinational energy assistance for Pyongyang."

SCHIEFFER